



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemarkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

19 June 2025

UCT achieves highest QS ranking in a decade

The University of Cape Town (UCT) has been ranked 150th globally, up from 171st in 2025 in the latest Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings. This upswing places the university firmly within the top 3% of 8 467 institutions evaluated, reinforcing its status as Africa's highest-ranked university for another year.

- [Download a short audio version.](#)

This evaluation run has been broader with more inclusive global coverage factoring in how widely cited the university is and showcasing its range of impactful research.

"This excellent improvement in standing reflects a consistent, concerted effort from the university over recent years. Moving from 171 to 150 is not just a numerical rise, but a recognition of the real-world impact of UCT's research, teaching and global partnerships," said Vice-Chancellor Professor Mosa Moshabela addressing the 21-spot improvement.

"While being placed high on the rankings is a cause for celebration and recognition of the hard work put in by staff and students, our mission remains rooted in generating quality, relevant knowledge that matters – for Africa and the world."

A more competitive and inclusive ranking landscape

QS evaluated 8 467 universities across 106 locations, including 112 new entrants, with 11 South African institutions participating.

UCT's performance should be understood in the context of several methodological enhancements:

- **International Student Diversity (ISD):** Introduced as an unweighted indicator to capture not only the proportion of international students, but also the variety of nationalities represented on campus.
- **Expanded Research Mappings:** QS increased its coverage of institutions included in research indicators by over 65%, now analysing over 8 000 universities using

Scopus data – improving the precision of Citations per Faculty and International Research Networks measures. This resulted in a strong increase for UCT in both indicator scores rising, which together make up 25% of the score for the overall ranking (see below).

- **Refined Reputation Data:** QS applied more sophisticated data-science techniques to validate five years of survey responses, enhancing the reliability of its Academic Reputation and Employer Reputation scores.

These changes reflect QS's commitment to greater data quality and global inclusion – and they underscore UCT's ability to excel amid evolving benchmarks.

Indicator highlights: UCT's areas of strength

Citations per faculty count for 20% of the overall score:

- **UCT rank:** 176 (up 118 places from 294 in the previous year)
- **Significance:** Measuring average citations per academic staff member (Scopus data), this indicator gauges research impact and quality. UCT's dramatic jump highlights the publication of high-impact, regionally relevant scholarship.

UCT's acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Internationalisation, Professor Jeff Murugan, said: "Our researchers are tackling critical challenges – infectious diseases, AI for development and energy innovation among others. Their work is being cited by peers worldwide. This reflects UCT's investment in research excellence."

International Research Networks (5% of overall score)

- **UCT rank:** 24 (up 12 places from 36)
- **Significance:** This indicator measures global co-authorship ties – demonstrating UCT's deepening collaborations with leading research institutions worldwide.

This rise to 24th in International Research Networks underlines UCT's expanding global footprint. Participation in [global research partnerships](#) plays a vital role in advancing knowledge exchange and strengthening collaborative research. The Africa Charter, central to this effort, establishes an African-centred framework that prioritises equitable collaboration, recognises indigenous knowledge systems, and sets new standards for impactful, accountable research partnerships.

Sustainability (5% of overall score)

- **UCT rank:** 45 (up five places from 50)
- **Significance:** Based on the standalone QS Sustainability Ranking (latest cycle), this indicator evaluates social and environmental impact through education and research. UCT's climb to 45th reflects its growing leadership in sustainable development across Africa.

"UCT has long championed sustainability and commitment to the [African Union's Agenda 2063](#) through teaching and learning, research and social responsiveness initiatives. Our work

on water security, biodiversity, inequality and climate resilience – led by renowned scholars in these fields – has fast gained international recognition,” said Professor Murugan.

Beyond the numbers: Relevance to Africa and the world

The rank jump to 150 is cause for celebration, and has resulted in UCT ranking the highest in a decade – improving in the raw score and making it into the top 10% despite the number of institutions ranked having almost doubled in the period.

For 2026, UCT’s raw score was 62.3% for a rank of 150; while in 2016 the raw score was 57.8% for a rank of 171. In terms of the percentages, in 2026 UCT came in the top 10% worldwide; while in 2015 the university was in the top 21.3%.

Year	In the Top %	Rank	Score	Number Ranked
2016	21.3	=171	57.8	800
2017	19.9	=191	48	959
2018	19.1	=191	48.9	1000
2019	20	=200	43.9	1000
2020	19.8	=198	44.1	1000
2021	22	=220	40.4	1000
2022	17.3	=226	40.3	1300
2023	16.7	=237	39.4	1418
2024	11.5	=173	48.7	1500
2025	11.4	=171	50	1500
2026	10	150	62.3	1501

Beyond the numbers: Relevance to Africa and the world

UCT’s true value lies in, amongst other tenets, regional leadership and global influence. Specifically, this refers to:

Addressing Africa’s priorities:

- **Public health innovations:** UCT-led research in infectious diseases, such as TB and HIV/AIDS, continues to drive impact and shape policy across the continent.
- **Climate resilience:** The Climate Systems Analysis Group at UCT informs [national adaptation strategies](#), boosting the university’s sustainability credentials.

Continental partnerships:

- UCT is a founding member of the [African Research Universities Alliance](#), collaborating on pan-African projects in agriculture, water security, governance, non-communicable diseases, post-conflict societies and inequality research.
- The university drives numerous partnerships that [showcase Africa’s research talent](#) and the ability of African researchers to impact local and global challenges.

Global engagement:

- Research partnerships with the Worldwide University Network and the International Alliance of Research Universities have produced high-impact publications in a wide range of fields.
- UCT's internationally co-authored papers, often cited in *Nature* and *Science*, drive the leap in citations per Faculty.
- Joint graduate programmes such as:
 - the [Research Without Borders Cotutelle Programme](#) in collaboration with University of Bristol,
 - the [Master's dual degrees](#) in governance and international relations, or in urban studies in collaboration with Sciences Po,
 - the [MA degree in Global Media](#) with the London School of Economics and Political Science all amplify knowledge exchange and capacity building.

UCT's vision: Purpose, impact, progress

"Rankings are indicators – not endpoints. As we rise in QS 2026, we remain focused on deepening our impact: training Africa's next generation of leaders, advancing research that tackles inequality, and expanding sustainable solutions that benefit our communities," said Professor Moshabela.

These latest rankings from QS reflect the value of UCT's Vision 2030. The university remains committed to:

- attracting students with exceptional potential from our country, our continent and our world
- offering a transformative and socially engaged undergraduate and postgraduate education
- providing both contact and digitally mediated education
- expanding our capacity to offer continuous education and micro-credentials
- producing research that answers the complex problems of today and tomorrow

About QS World University Rankings

These rankings assess institutions on six core metrics: Academic Reputation (30%), Employer Reputation (15%), Faculty/Student Ratio (10%), Citations per Faculty (20%), International Faculty (5%), and International Students (5%).

The 2026 edition also introduces the International Student Diversity (unweighted) metric, evaluating both the proportion and nationality spread of international students.

- [Read further details about the methodology and full rankings.](#)

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Elijah Moholola

Spokesperson
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town

Rondebosch
Tel: 021 650 5674
Cell: 083 981 7770
Email: elijah.moholola@uct.ac.za
Website: www.uct.ac.za